CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SIX HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 August 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Michel Servais (Belgium)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 632nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As I announced at our last plenary meeting, today I plan to submit to the Conference for adoption the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, contained in document CD/1165, as well as the recommendation appearing in paragraph 15 of the progress report of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events, which has already been circulated as document CD/1163.

On the speakers' list today I have the representatives of Japan and Indonesia. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Tanaka.

Mr. TANAKA (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am convinced that under your able guidance we will conclude this year's session successfully and I would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I have asked for the floor to make the following statement on behalf of the Western Group.

Last Thursday, we listened to the report of Ambassador Shah, special coordinator for agenda item 1, "Nuclear test ban". We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Shah for his untiring efforts in the search for agreement to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on an NTB.

We also heard a statement on behalf of the Group of 21 on this issue, to which I wish to refer briefly.

The Western Group also regrets that it has not been possible to agree on establishing an Ad Hoc Committee during this session of the CD. We also attach great importance to the issue of an NTB, and we wanted to see this Ad Hoc Committee re-established as early as possible. Last year we did useful work with an adequate mandate and we wanted to continue substantive work in the Ad Hoc Committee this year.

However, this year's experience has shown that if discussions on a mandate are allowed to become too protracted the true objective, substantive work on the agenda item, can be lost.

This year, we witnessed important developments in the field of nuclear testing, which should have been discussed in the Ad Hoc Committee. We regret all the more the failure to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee in that, with the participation of all five nuclear-weapon States, after France's decision to join, the work in the Committee could have been particularly useful.

(Mr. Tanaka, Japan)

We hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on an NTB will be re-established at the beginning of the 1993 session with a mandate acceptable to all delegations, and we hope that this year's annual report of the CD will reflect such an intention.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your kind words and encouragement, and for your statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Brotodiningrat.

Mr. BROTODININGRAT (Indonesia) (translated from French): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you in the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. Your wide experience and great diplomatic skill, as well as your other personal qualities, offer a solid guarantee of the success of our work. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador O'Sullivan of Australia, who chaired the Conference in an outstanding manner up to the beginning of this month.

(continued in English)

The sessions of the Conference on Disarmament this year are taking place in an encouraging, albeit still fragile, global environment, offering better opportunities. The East-West conflict and its world corollaries - ideological rivalry and bloc politics, military confrontation and competition for spheres of influence - no longer dominate the international landscape and there has been a marked broadening and deepening of the dimensions of disarmament. Beyond the mere regulation of armaments and the arms race, disarmament agreements now include the destruction of existing arsenals as well as limiting future production. In this connection, it is heartening for us to note that important steps have indeed been taken toward the objective and purposes of nuclear disarmament.

We have witnessed a number of major disarmament achievements such as the completion of the INF Treaty, the signing of the START agreement, unilateral declarations made by a number of nuclear Powers to further reduce nuclear armaments, as well as the Washington agreement concluded by Presidents Bush and Yeltsin to make further reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the two countries. In the same vein our hopes for further progress have been bolstered by the recent accession to the non-proliferation Treaty of two nuclear-weapon States, China and France, the intention of new republics in the former Soviet Union to follow suit and the adoption by France of a moratorium on nuclear testing.

However, it would be definitely wrong to allow this positive spirit of optimism to fall into the trap of negative complacency because, despite the general improvement of the situation at the global level, political will is still wanting and progress is still lacking on efforts to protect non-nuclear States against the use, or the threat of the use, of nuclear weapons. Strategic doctrines continue to cast their shadow across the globe, while the

(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

world is still threatened by existing nuclear arsenals which are being further refined through continued dangerous testing. Furthermore, as has often been said, we should not lose sight of the deeper causes of unrest, simmering discontent and violent conflict that still ravage some regions of the world. Compounding the difficulty, there is the outbreak of new rivalries which have rekindled age-old fears and enmities. As acknowledged by the summit meeting of the Security Council last January, "change, however welcome, has brought new risks for stability and security".

In the midst of such a precarious situation, my delegation is gratified to note major developments taking place in our own region, South-East Asia, which are certainly having an important influence and a positive impact on the security of the region. The first major development is, without doubt, the signing, last October, of the Paris agreements on the comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian conflict. In spite of the difficulties presently encountered, Indonesia continues to firmly believe that only the Paris agreements can ensure the restoration of peace in Cambodia. Therefore we feel it absolutely imperative that all the Cambodian factions should stand by their commitment to all the provisions of these agreements, and that the international community should maintain its unwavering support for the mission of UNTAC. As the Indonesian Foreign Minister recently stated, "We cannot allow the unravelling of the Paris agreements without condemning the Cambodian people to more suffering and more bloodshed. Neither can we condone the reinterpretation, by any party to the agreements, of some of their provisions. The agreements should now be upheld in their balanced totality."

The second important development is the accession of Viet Nam and Laos to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia. Indeed this accession represents an important act of confidence-building which, we believe, will further widen and strengthen the framework of cooperation on regional security already in place, and make it even more effective for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, it is encouraging to note that those two important developments have created an improved climate, conducive to the pursuance of ASEAN's undiminished attachment to the vision of a ZOPFAN (zone of peace, freedom and neutrality), as well as a South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. In this context my delegation attaches great importance to the reconvening of the ASEAN Working Group on those subjects and looks forward to the successful completion of its work.

At the last ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila two weeks ago, the attention of Ministers was drawn to the South China Sea, an area perceived to be endowed with an untapped wealth of natural resources but, at the same time, a source of potential conflict due to overlapping claims of sovereignty and jurisdiction over particular islands and marine areas. Not being itself a claimant, and yet belonging to the region, Indonesia has for quite some time paid serious attention to this problem. We have taken the initiative of organizing three successive workshops in Bandung, Bali and most recently in Jogjakarta, gathering government officials in their personal capacities, scholars and technical experts from the region in an attempt to help manage this potential conflict by translating it into an opportunity for cooperation.

(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

From those three workshops a proposition has emerged to the effect that, pending the resolution of sovereignty and territorial disputes, the littoral States could nevertheless already engage in mutually beneficial collaborative activities that would not prejudice their respective claims. Therefore we are satisfied that such a proposition found reflection in the ASEAN declaration on the South China Sea adopted very recently in Manila, which:

(a) Emphasizes the necessity to resolve all sovereignty and jurisdictional issues pertaining to the South China Sea by peaceful means, without resort to force;

(b) Urges all parties concerned to exercise restraint, with a view to creating a positive climate for the eventual resolution of all disputes;

(c) Resolves, without prejudicing the sovereignty and jurisdiction of countries having direct interests in the area, to explore the possibility of cooperation in the South China Sea relating to the safety of maritime navigation and communication, protection against pollution of the marine environment, coordination of search and rescue operations, efforts towards combating piracy and armed robbery as well as collaboration in the campaign against illicit trafficking in drugs;

(d) Commends all parties concerned to apply the principles contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia as the basis for establishing a code of international conduct over the South China Sea.

After a long and extremely painstaking negotiation process, the Conference on Disarmament is now approaching the conclusion of the chemical weapons convention. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador von Wagner and the delegation of Germany for their hard work to finalize the draft for possible adoption by the forty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. Being a country which has never possessed nor had the intention of acquiring or developing chemical weapons, Indonesia has from the very beginning attached great importance to the early and successful conclusion of the chemical weapons convention, both as a position of principle and as a matter of real interest. This serious commitment was translated in the most concrete manner when recently the Indonesian delegation demonstrated its readiness to exercise flexibility on its strongly held position regarding pertinent issues still pending.

However, it would be less than candid for my delegation not to say that, despite the strenuous efforts made by all involved in the negotiation, the pre-final version of the draft convention still leaves some points of concern to us, particularly on the practicability and implementability of the verification time-frames. For a country like Indonesia, which is remote from the headquarters of the organization, with difficult geographical conditions, and which is still in the process of developing transport and communication infrastructure, the relatively short time-frames for the conduct of on-site

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inspections could very well become an impediment for the proper implementation of the convention. Unless a certain understanding to overcome this problem is made, such countries as ours will be put in a disadvantaged position when they become parties to the convention. We therefore still hope that appropriate ways and means can be found to address this legitimate concern and to resolve this practical problem.

Now that the negotiation on the chemical weapons convention is approaching completion, a pertinent question that springs to mind is how the Conference on Disarmament will function as a negotiating forum in the future. We find it an unfortunate irony that the improving situation in the international scene fails to find reflection in the work of the CD. It is indeed disheartening for us to note from this year's balance sheet that, except for the work on the chemical weapons convention, almost no progress has been registered on the rest of the agenda. We are particularly disappointed with the failure of the Conference to establish this year an ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban. My delegation continues to believe that the prompt realization of a comprehensive test ban is indispensable for the effective prevention, not only of the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also of environmental and health risks associated with underground nuclear explosions.

It is thus evident that in order to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and to make its work more effective, an exercise of soul-searching is urgently needed. Such an exercise in our view should be conducted even before members start wasting precious time and scarce resources through quarrels on the agenda, the establishment of ad hoc committees and the elaboration of their respective mandates, at the beginning of next year's session. For its part my delegation stands ready to participate and cooperate in such endeavours.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Brotodiningrat for his statement and his words of encouragement to the Chair. I have now reached the end of the list of speakers for this morning. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? None does.

I now put before the Conference for decision the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, contained in document CD/1165. If there is no objection, I will take it that the Conference adopts this report.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I warmly congratulate the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the adoption of a report dealing with a particularly delicate and complex matter. Ambassador Neagu performed the task we entrusted to him with a degree of skill and diplomatic experience which constitute a valuable asset for all our work.

(The President)

I suggest that we should now move to the adoption of the recommendation contained in paragraph 15 of the progress report of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts, concerning the dates of the next session of the Group, which proposes to meet between 15 and 26 February 1993. May I take it that the Conference adopts this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): In accordance with the timetable of meetings for this week, immediately after Thursday's plenary meeting, the Conference will hold informal consultations, naturally with interpretation services, on outstanding issues related to the drafting of our annual report to the General Assembly. Specifically, it will examine the paragraphs relating to agenda items 1, 2 and 3. As was decided at last week's presidential consultations, the paragraphs relating to item 1, entitled "Nuclear test ban", will be circulated to the special coordinator appointed by the Conference on this agenda item, Ambassador Shah, the representative of India, and to the group coordinators, for preliminary study before the informal consultations. The paragraphs of the annual report dealing with agenda item 9, "Transparency in armaments", will be considered under the chairmanship of the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, who will hold an informal meeting on Thursday morning immediately after our consultations on items 1, 2 and 3. I very much hope that we will complete our work on the annual report by the end of this week, so as to enable the secretariat to prepare the revised version of the report. I am also counting on cooperation on the part of delegations participating in the consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, who are to meet for the last time on Thursday at 3 p.m. precisely.

We have now reached the end of the agenda, and so I will adjourn the meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place on Thursday, 20 August, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.